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ABSTRACT

Increasing numbers of teachers seem to recognize that sequencing assignments is an effective way to teach writing. A sequence of 20 writing assignments was developed by four composition instructors at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado. The first eight exercises asked cadets to look at and think about their physical surroundings at the academy. Exercise two, for example, asked the students to put in writing what they liked and disliked most about the academy, something they were not accustomed to explaining on paper. Exercise two was predominantly "expressive" in terms of James Kinneavy's "aims of discourse," while exercise five was predominantly "referential." Exercise seven invited students to adopt a persuasive aim as they wrote a letter recommending an improvement of the cadet chapel site or program. Exercises fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen involved the building of a device to tell the students where they were, providing them with an opportunity to work in a group on a technical writing project. Exercise seventeen asked for a narrative journey, actual or imaginary. The last two exercises invited retrospection, with exercise twenty being the final exam. One of the principles around which this sequence was designed was variation of assignments in terms of aim rather than mode. (HTH)

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ED213014

Designing a Sequence of Freshman Composition Assignments

James R. Aubrey

(This paper was delivered at the University of Wyoming in July 1981 to the Wyoming Conference on Freshmen and Sophomore Composition. The attached sequence of writing exercises was handled out to the audience.)

When I attended last year's Wyoming Conference, I had just handed out copies of William Coles' book The Plural I, to the seven new instructors at the Air Force Academy, as required reading for our department's workshop later in the summer. With sequencing on my mind, then, I was a little surprised when the word sequencing never once came up during my week here, and I shared my observation with David Roberts at the picnic. I don't know by what process this year's program came to resemble a redress of my grievance, but I hope that the presence of seminars on the subject isn't merely the result of fashion, or faction. Whatever the cause, increasing numbers of teachers seem to recognize that sequencing assignments is an effective way of teaching writing. I've sequenced my writing assignments for the last two semesters, the first time by myself and the second time in collaboration with four other instructors. When I learned that one of today's papers would be called "The How and Why of Sequencing," I shifted the emphasis of my talk away from theory to practice, to some of the considerations that went into designing our particular sequence. However, I do have a few general observations, first.

Published endorsements of sequencing seem to be based more on personal experience and intuition than on scientific research through trial and error. I'm not saying that there is no scientific basis or that sequencing is incompatible with

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developmental psychology; indeed, I'm confident that someone will eventually measure and document the results of a sequencing experiment in his doctoral dissertation one that doubtless will mention Jerome Bruner's concept of "profound redundancy" and James Britton's Development of Writing Abilities (11-18). But the people whose names we most often associate with sequencing are pragmatic more than scientific or theoretical in their own writings. In Composing II, for example, William Coles offers the opinion for example, that a good sequence will "enable students to imagine various ways of formulating problems and what it can mean to formulate a particular problem one way as opposed to formulating in some other way." Walker Gibson also uses shifting the point of view as the basis for his sequence of fifteen assignments that make up his 1959 book Seeing and Writing. Both Coles and Gibson acknowledge their debt to Theodore Baird, whose use of sequenced assignments at Amherst in the 1950's is now emulated by so many of his former students that one can talk of an "Amherst Mafia". Baird first described his "racket" publicly in a 1952 article for the Amherst Alumni News, where he called the ends of teaching "mysterious" and his successes "a miracle." A gifted teacher, Baird had intuited that good writing assignments are like Socratic questions, which lead students to think and to say things that they did not know they could think and say. I'd like to quote his illustration of the learning process:

> A student who is a good tennis player sets out to write a paper on what he knows what he is writing about, yet as he begins to address himself to his subject, he immediately encounters the inescapable fact that his consciousness of his own action contains a large area of experience quite beyond his powers of expression. The muscular tensions, the rhythm of his body as he shifts his weight, above all the feel of the action by which he knows a stroke is good or bad almost before the ball leaves the

racket, all this and much more lies beyond his command of language, and rendered almost speechless he produces a mess. He knows in the sense that he can perform the action, but he does not know in the sense that he can communicate this action to a reader. At this point the teacher tries to get him to distinguish between these two levels of experience, to become aware of them, to generalize about them. The next step is for the student to take for himself by recognizing that a part or an element of his experience can be communicated to another person when he isolates the order in which he throws the ball into the air, raises his racket, and so on, and that the order of his action as distinguished from the action itself is the subject of his writing. The student may even perceive that between the order of movements as he sees them and the order of words in a sentence some relation can be made, and that when he has made this relation he knows what he is talking about.

I might add that only when he can write it, perhaps, does he truly know. Baird's individual assignments, tactfully written and designed to increase awareness of how language relates to understanding of commonplace activities and perceptions, probably have as much to do with his success as the relation of such assignments within a sequence. Perhaps the idea of sequencing is no more than a tacit recognition that the student won't "get it" the first time, but must be prodded in different places before he'll move! In any case, Theodore Baird seems to deserve some epithet like "father of sequencing."

The specific sequence I've handed out has twenty exercises (which the students received one at a time, or course.) Four of us collaborated in the design; five

instructors used it in nine sections of freshman English at the Academy last semester. If we had chosen to reveal the "hidden agenda," we might have titled the sequence "finding yourself"; although any set of student-centered writing assignments should lead to self-discovery, this sequence also has as its surface subject the locating of one's physical self.

The first eight exercises ask cadets to look at and to think about their physical surroundings at the Academy. This "mini-sequence" was written by John Thomson, who has pointed out to me more than once the need for any good sequence to be tailored to the institution at which it's used.

Exercise two, for example, asks students to put in writing what they most strongly like and most strongly dislike about the Academy, something they're accustomed to talking about with roommates and friends but not accustomed to explaining on paper. Most of them wrote two separate paragraphs or essays, since we didn't insist on any particular shape or length for this (or any other) assignment, hope of getting them to take the content of their writing more seriously. It is possible, I find, to teach a pattern of organization without prescribing a format. Exercise five, for example, asks students to look at the two cadet dormitories, one constructed in the mid-1950'sand the other in the late 1960s, and to "write an essay about the differences." We received comparison and contrast essays without any formal study of that mode, then worked inductively from samples of their work until we could agree about what worked best and why.

As the second paragraph of exercise five tells students, they were putting aside their feelings more on this assignment than, say, on the exercise about their likes and dislikes. In terms of Kinneavy's "aims of discourse," exercise five is predominantly "referential" and exercise two "expressive." Exercise seven invites students to adopt

a persuasive aim as they write a letter recommending an improvement to the cadet chapel site or program. As you may already be inferring, one of the principles around which this sequence is designed is that the assignments should vary, and that they should vary in terms of aim rather than mode of discourse,in in order to convey to students a sense that good writing is responsive to the writer's purpose and to the writer's sense of audience. Purpose and audience require different looks in different situations, of course.

Exercises nine through twelve ask students to work with a book that purports to relate fantasy and reality. My inspiration for this mini-sequence came from our freshman writing director, who had used several riddles and mathematical puzzles in a sequence he developed at the Iowa Institute on Writing and used at the Academy last fall. About the time I was worrying about using the same puzzles in the spring that my students' roommates might have talked about the previous semester, a book by Kit Williams, called Masquerade appeared in U.S. bookstores. (Hold up the book) It's still on the bestseller list, so I suppose that many of you have seen the illustrated book about a rabbit who carries a jewel as a gift from the moon to the sun. The book contains clues to the location of a quite valuable jewelled rabbit which Williams has buried somewhere in England. As exercise eleven points out, "the treasure is as likely to be found by a bright child of ten with an understanding of language, simple mathematics, and astronomy as it is to be found by an Oxford man," and some cadets took this as a challenge to puzzle over the book at great length, in hope of getting rich. No one succeeded. Not only is the book itself part of a large riddle, the text itself contains riddles, and exercise nine asks students to tell in writing exactly how they went about solving one of these. One of the riddles begins, for example, "fifty is my first, nothing is my second , five just makes my third, my fourth a vowel is reckoned." To solve it, the reader must realize that the roman numerals for fifty and five are "L" and "V", and that "nothing" looks like the letter "O". The answer is the

word LOVE. I urged students to take notes as they worked so that they could recreate the elusive process by which they arrived at a flash of insight, what trials didn't work, and how they could know whether they were in error when they didn't yet know the answer. Most of them shied away from describing the moment of insight, except to say "suddenly it occurred to me," but we had some fine discussions about which writers were "applying pressure."

The book Masquerade is like no other book students have seen, and they're not so quick to adopt the usual poses and the techniques of literary analysis they've leaned in high school. But the real virtue of this group of exercises was that most of us found it interesting, even fun. Perhaps another principle of sequence design should be that it somenow invite students to experiment with their writing, and that is more likely to happen if the assignments are enjoyable. John Warnock once wrote in Freshman English News that "play" is a word that best sums up what kind of activity ought to prevail in a writing classroom, and the tone in which a teacher writes an assignment can influence students' perceptions of whether play is acceptable or not. I found that out to my dismay with exercise twelve, for example, which I wrote in a humorous vein but indended to evoke a serious piece of writing with a persuasive aim. It read:

> You are sitting in your instructor's office getting Extra Instruction on how to undangle your modifiers when Lieutenant Colonel David C. Whitlock, Chairman of Basic Courses, rushes in to reveal that one of your classmates has just told General Orth, the Dean of Faculty, I'm failing English lllY, and I don't know what's going on. The only textbook I received was some children's book called Masquerade." It sounds to you as if the English Department is in big trouble. Well, you're no fool. Your instructor probably had something to do with picking the book, so you

offer to write a letter to the Dean defending the use of Masquerade in this course. Your instructor, busy as he is with a study of commas in Old English heroic poetry, gratefully accepts your offer but points out that he'll need something within two days. "No problem, sir," you reply. "If you'll just give me a sheet of English Department letterhead stationery, I'll have an error-free copy ready for Lt Col Whitlock's signature, by next lesson."

I suppose I should have expected the responses I sometimes got, but I was surprised to get would-be letters to the Dean written in the same casual, smirking tone I had used in the scenario. Others failed to "play the role," writing for Lt Col Whitlock's signature, "I was sitting here in English lllY . . ." Ah, well.

Perhaps the best assignments evoke responses that aren't entirely predictable; I'm certainly not eager to return to my practice as a novice instructor of showing students the sure-fire, no-fail, five-paragraph theme, by use of which, to paraphrase Samuel Johnson, even though nothing is omitted, nothing much is achieved. Exercise thirteen was intended to be one of the more playful assignments, designed to evoke a narrative, perhaps with dialogue. We received everything from discussions of language barriers to stories with some literary qualities. Whatever the benefits to students, diversity of student writing can make the task of reading much more enjoyable for the instructor with thirty papers on the desk.

Exercises fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen involved the building of "a device to tell you where you are," a project less important in itself than for the opportunity it provided for students to work in a group, to write about the dynamics of that group experience, and then to explain the technical side of their devices to the class, both orally and in writing. Many groups made sextants, but we also got some imaginative,

even bizzare equipment—from an astrolabe and a combination pedometer-compass, to a transparent helmet with a mirror that directed the wearer's eyes above his head to an arrow, pointing downward, labeled in mirror-image lettering, "You are here." Our wish to have them try some technical writing grew from the nature of the institution, which attracts many students with interests in engineering, but I can imagine that this kind of assignment would probably work well with any group of college students.

Exercise seventeen asks for a narrative journey, actual or imaginary, as a transitional assignment between the tech writing on a navigation device to the study of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, the only other textbook in the course besides Masquerade.

Conrad was difficult going for most of them, but four lessons allowed lots of time for discussion of how details in the story are sometimes more important than the plot. Even with assistance, however, I admit that in their written responses to exercise eighteen, on the importance of "seeing" in the novel, Conrad's reach exceeded the students' grasp—or grasping.

The last two exercises invited retrospection. Nineteen recognized that the course was graded, even if individual exercises were not. We probably should have pointed out to students that the statement about Incomplete grades is in one sense absurd and in another quite true; then we would have set them up to decide where, exactly, they wanted to locate themselves with regard to the statement. And exercise twenty was the "final exam" (an institutional requirement for any course at the Academy). I did tell my students to disregard the instructions to put their reviews of their writing into military letters because I was pretty sure that the format—and for some the lack of typing skill—was going to erode the quality of

content. The responses in many cases told me more than a formal course critique would have.

I confess that most of the sequence "design principles" I've advocated or implied here, like "vary the aim," are not the result of breakthroughs in scholarship, nor are they necessarily the fruits of my labors alone. Some fruits I've stolen from the trees of my colleagues, and some from the Amherst orchard. But the fruits are ripe, and I invite you to taste them and, perhaps, to plant a few seeds in your own institutional gardens.

Exercise 1

Unlike most courses at USAFA, we don't begin by handing you a heavy syllabus. But you've been here a while, and you know what I mean. They all begin by listing the "Course Objectives." This is so that cadets will know how to study for tests. Well, we don't have any tests. We do have a course objective, however, and that is to enable you to improve your writing. Notice the emphasis is on you.

I would bet that, even though you may be reluctant to take freshman composition, you want to be a good writer. For this first assignment, I want you to write about what you understand by good writing. Naturally, I expect that you will do your best to make this piece of your writing reflect your definition of good writing.

Puzzled as to how to begin? Try writing about a specific writing experience. Choose a time when you were very successful at writing. Explain why. Or choose a time you were a failure. Explain why. (Incidentally, is your choice of success or failure dependent upon the grade someone else gave you? Have you ever written anything that wasn't for a grade?)

I am not going to give these back immediately. Rather I will hold them for a while—perhaps the whole semester. Eventually, however, we will discuss some of your responses in class.

Exercise 2

So it's January already and you're still here. In fact, you've come back. Phase three of fourthclass training has begun, recognition is less than three months away. Take a few minutes to jot down the ten things you like best about USAFA. (If you say you don't like anything, why did you come back?) Then list the things you dislike. (This list may be as long as you like.) Note: I am asking for things, not people. AOC's for example, are people. So are English teachers.

Now: identify your favorite thing from the first list. I know it's hard, but you're a cadet. Briefly explain why it is your favorite thing. Yes, go ahead and explain why you dislike whatever it is you most dislike, too. Try to be brief about that, too.

Note: Your audience for this and every assignment is the rest of the class. We'll discuss some of your responses next time.

Exercise 3

You have just read several of your classmates' explanations of likes and dislikes. Here are two more we haven't looked at. I would like you to take these two sets home (I don't have to tell you that that means Vandenberg or Sijan, do I?) and do some reflective thinking. What reasons do your classmates give for their likes and dislikes? Are their arguments convincing?

Oh, yes. Do translate your thinking to paper. And . . . try to be objective. Don't say you're convinced simply because you share your classmate's judgment. Are his/her or these words convincing? Why or why not?

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Exercise 4

It's possible, but extremely unlikely, that you still feel about USAFA as you did on 23 June. However, as you've come to know the Academy, you've probably been disillusioned. You've changed your mind—probably several times. Something you once liked, for example, now may be high on your list of dislikes. Or, vice versa.

Tell about one change of mind you've had.

Exercise 5

So far we've been discussing and writing about the quality of life here at USAFA. Something that contributes a lot to your perception of the quality of life are your living quarters. All of you spent a memorable six weeks in Vandenberg Hall, and a lot of you still live there. Those of you who live in Sijan have probably made comparisons between life as it is lived in the two dorms. The reason you like Sijan better, if you do, may simply be due to the fact that BCT is over.

But—put aside your feelings for the moment and go look at those two dormitories. Look for differences between them—differences in design, architecture, construction, materials, decorations. Inside and out. Put your lists of differences in some kind of order and write an essay about the differences you see between Vandenberg and Sijan halls.

Exercise 6

Well, you've had some practice seeing, and you've read two accounts of seeing a fish. Both Scudder's and Shaler's accounts are also, obviously, accounts of changes of mind.

Now I want you to go out and see a building you probably think you already know very well—the Cadet Chapel. Study it. (Did you know that the Latin studere means "to be eager, to take pains"?) Describe what you see. Be sure to let me and the rest of the class know where you are standing or sitting when you see the chapel.

Exercise 7

Does the Cadet Chapel contribute positively or negatively to the quality of life for a cadet? How can it be improved?

Using Cadet Wing stationery, write a letter directed IN TURN to the Command Chaplain and the Superintendent recommending an improvement either to the building or to the chapel program.

Exercise 8

Here is an actual letter that one of you wrote for Exercise #7. Let's presume the Chaplain and Superintendent have given the letter a sympathetic reading but, alas, they have to deny the request. Maybe the request was too costly, or the letter ignored deeper problems or the writer didn't make a solid case. Whatever the situation, take the role of the Superintendent—or even of the Chaplain—and write a letter of rejection controlling the tone in such a way that the original letter writer might not be offended.

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You might want to check Air Force Regulations and your own Air Force Cadet Wing Regulations for the various letter formats available. Type the letter on appropriate Air Force Academy Cadet Wing letterhead. Please prepare the letter for General Tallman's signature; on the bottom line of the signature block, type in "Superintendent, USAF Academy", as if the letter were really signed by the Superintendent. (But, since you have written the letter, sign your own name—instead of General Tallman's.)

Exercise 9

So far we've looked at fish, dorm rooms, and the Chapel. By now you've probably looked at the pictures in Masquerade, by Kit Williams, and have played at finding the hares in the pictures. For next time, read the "story" that accompanies the pictures and try to answer the eight rhyming riddles. I assume you won't be able to answer all of them, but with effort you can probably solve at least one. Your next assignment is to tell me in detail, in writing, how you went about solving the most challenging riddle you were able to answer. What sorts of assumptions did you make before you began? Did you have to revise any of those assumptions? Did you experiment by trial and error? If so, what "trials" didn't work, and how did you know when you were in "error"? Was there a moment when you said "Aha"? (Maybe you should keep some notes as you work.)

Exercise 10

To create Masquerade, Kit Williams spent three years doing the paintings. He wrote the story afterwards, in only three weeks. In an interview for the December 1980 issue of Smithsonian, Williams suggested that the pictures are the text and the words are the illustrations. Reread the book and look for connections between the text and the pictures. For next lesson, write about some interesting ways one picture relates to the text.

Exercise 11

Let's say you've found all the hares in Masquerade and have answered all the riddles. You still wouldn't know where to dig for the prize on the back cover, would you? Britishers have been dredging lakes, scouring woods, and digging up one another's lawns in vain for over one year, now, but no one has yet discovered the buried treasure. According to the Smithsonian article, again, the publisher of Masquerade maintains that the treasure "is as likely to be found by a bright child of ten with an understanding of language, simple mathematics and astronomy as it is to be found by an Oxford man." And, it isn't necessary to go to the British Isles to locate the treasure. The clues in the book tell it all." Smithsonian quotes Williams to have said that "the essential element of the master riddle is in the drawings. You have to have all the pages—all the drawings—but you also need the words." (One reason he used visual clues, by the way, was to prevent people like you from using a computer to solve the puzzle). From Williams' description of how he buried the treasure, the location would seem to be within easy driving distance of Horsley in Gloucestershire (England). Do you have any ideas about how to decide what information in the book matters and what doesn't? How might things that do matter relate in a way that could help you pinpoint a geographical location? For next lesson, try out some approaches to solving the problem and write about why you did what you did. Do you have any guesses about how, eventually, the "master riddle" may be solved?

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Exercise 12

You are sitting in your instructor's office getting EI on how to undangle your modifiers when Lt Col David C. Whitlock, Chairman of Basic Courses, rushes in to reveal that one of your classmates has just told General Orth, "I'm failing English IIIY, and I don't know what's going on. The only textbook I received was some children's book called Masquerade." It sounds to you as if the English Department is in big trouble. Well, you're no fool. Your instructor probably had something to do with picking the book, so you offer to write a letter to the Dean defending the use of Masquerade in this course. Your instructor, busy as he is with a study of commas in Old English heroic poetry, gratefully accepts your offer but points out that he'll need something within two days. "No sweat, sir," you reply. "If you'll just give me a sheet of English Department letterhead stationery, I'll have an error-free copy ready for Lt Col Whitlock's signature, by next lesson."

Exercise 13

It's a clear, crisp spring evening. You've been "hard at it" on mid-semester exams and, needing a break, you put on your parka and trek off toward the Flatiron. Sitting there, gazing East and watching the stars, you notice a silver bullet-shaped object moving slowly West. As you watch, it becomes obvious that its present trajectory will bring it down close to you—in Jack's Valley.

Curious, you reconnoiter the landing site. Watching from behind a bush, you see the missile land, a door open, and an obviously bewildered alien step out. Being fearless, as cadets are, you bravely step up to it to find out who and where it is from. But before you open your mouth, the visitor pre-empts you and, using English, asks—nay demands—to know where it is.

You're dumbfounded. Where to start? You've always known where you are, "I mean sure, this is the Air Force Academy in Colorado—isn't it?" You've always told people what state, what town, and perhaps pointed to a map. So, it has always been easy to explain your location.

Without the aid of maps or instruments, explain to your interstellar visitor where he or she is. Remember, he or she is from outside our world. Does it mean anything to him or her to say this is Colorado Springs, Colorado, or even the United States? What kind of information can you count on this visitor having? Help your newly found friend see where the "navigation" went wrong.

Exercise 14

Let's talk about the skill of Navigation for awhile. Your ability to move from one place to another over a given distance depends on mathematics, astronomy, and scientific instrument development. For instance, Pytheus in 325 B.C. fairly accurately determined the distance of his home in Marseilles from the North Pole (that is, his latitude) with the use of a crude instrument (called a Gnomon) and some basic Geometry. Or consider the Polynesians. They regularly sailed between Tahiti and New Zealand with surprising precision using a simple instrument called the "Magic Calabash." Or, consider Copernicus. In his book De Revolutionibus, Copernicus theorized that the Earth and other planets revolved around the Sun. Heliocentric theory caused a profound change in scientific thinking during the 16th century. Even though Einstein taught us that Copernicus' view was simplistic, we

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still think in his basic terms. Indeed, navigation across the face of the earth and through the sky requires us to do so.

So the skill of Navigation is not new, is not dependent upon modern technology. If ancient peoples could build navigational devices, surely the technologically sophisticated members of '84 can do as well—maybe even better (!)

We're betting that you, too, can build a device that would enable you to determine, with accuracy, your position on earth. Divide into groups of four or five. Brainstorm. Make plans. Build a device that tells us where you are.

Each group will submit a preliminary report. Here is a sample format from a future textbook on technical writing that Major McCarron has recently co-authored with Lt Col Grimshaw. This handout on technical writing can serve as a format with your report; or, you may want to invent one of your own, one that better suits your purpose. An any event, prepare a draft format, with a design sketch of your device and some preliminary writing.

Each of you should keep a journal of your research and thoughts about what it's like to work in a group. These observations and insights will prove very useful in the next few assignments.

Exercise 15

Bring your device to class and show us how it works. Group members should be prepared to discuss what their final report will look like.

Have you had major or minor disagreements in your subgroup? Any frustrations? If so, what are they? Have you attempted to resolve them? What successes have you experienced in your subgroup?

Please tell us about your <u>own</u> experiences—your joys as well as your disappointments—while working on this team project. Notice that I'm not asking about your project or its progress. I'm interested in knowing what problems you had building your device and how you got along together.

Exercise 16

For next time, prepare and submit the final draft of your technical report. You may want to include diagrams to help us see. For questions on endnotes and bibliography, consult your MLA Handbook. This report is not a group effort. Each of you should prepare your own report.

Exercise 17

We have "navigated" a long way this semester. We have travelled through dormitories, followed hares across the universe, and met aliens. And now we're about to take a journey back in time, to the turn of the century, on an old boat up the Congo River.

Let's relax a bit before we take our final voyage. Tell us about a journey you once took, or even plan to take, real or imaginative. Your writing might take the form of a story, or a poem, or an essay. So, let your creative juices flow—as long as your narrative lets us see what you see.

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Exercise 18

At the bottom of p. 27 of Heart of Darkness, Marlow says of Kurtz:

> He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream - making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams....

All semester we've been asking you to see clearly, but we've usually given you something to look at. If Marlow can't see, how can we ask you to? (After all, Agassiz handed Shaler a fish, not an empty jar.) Are you bothered to learn that Marlow doesn't know what his own story means? Or, is this just another peculiarity of Marlow's storytelling? Does your reaction to the book so far relate to any of these questions?

Exercise 19

So it is May, and you are still here. Oh boy (or oh girl)! The last writing exercise before the final exam. The last chance to order things for yourself through writing. The last chance to impress the paper with pen and mind. The last opportunity to impress (or depress?) your readers. Let's go for it one more time. In a recent article in a scholarly journal, an English professor at the University of North Caroline wrote, "The only real grade one can give at the end of a writing course is "Incomplete." That sounds like a peculiar statement. What do you think it means?

Exercise 20

For the next three hours write a retrospective review of your writing this semester. Pay particular attention to what you did well, for you want me to be properly alert, but concede, if necessary, a weakness here or there so I'll believe in your essential humanity. You might write about how you coped with different kinds of writing situations, how well you organized your thoughts, how much range you got into your voice, etc. What has writing done for you? Does writing help you solve, order, etc. what you see? Organize your thoughts around any plan you wish, but cast your thoughts in the form of an informal but analytical military letter to your instructor-complete with salutation and closing.

Some mechanical details for this exercise. Keep your letter to one single-spaced typed page. Leave the final hour of the four-hour exam period for typing. Attach your folder of papers from the semester as an appendix.

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